



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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DEQ arrests Vacherie businessman for environmental violations

BATON ROUGE –The Criminal Investigation Division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality arrested a Vacherie centralized waste operator on 89 felony counts. They involved violations of his facility's Louisiana Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit and seven felony counts of submitting false statements to the department in violation of his LPDES permit.

"The systematic, intentional violation of a permit is a serious matter and will not go without consequence," said Beau James Brock, Assistant to the Secretary.

Charles Earnest Toth, 45, is alleged to have knowingly operated his facility in a manner that allowed for systematic illegal discharges and to have submitted documents containing false material statements on LPDES forms submitted to the department.

Toth is accused, among other violations, of routinely dumping loads of untreated wastewater on the ground, bypassing the treatment facility at his place of business in Vacherie. DEQ staff took soil samples on the property and determined there were chemicals related to oil and petroleum products around broken pipes on the ground. Toth is also accused of tampering with discharge monitoring report samples before sending the samples to the lab.

"Dumping untreated wastewater is against our mission of protecting human health and the environment," said Jeffrey Nolan, DEQ-CID Manager. "There is nothing worse than potentially contaminating a drinking water supply. He was benefiting economically by not following his permit, which is unfair to those businesses that follow the rules."

Knowing violations of LPDES permit provisions, upon convicted, can result in a fine of not less than \$5,000, but no more than \$50,000 per day of violation, or imprisonment for not more than three years, with or without hard labor, or both. Knowing submission of false material statements in violation of LPDES permit requirements, upon conviction, can be subject to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than two years, with or without hard labor, or both.

DEQ's civil enforcement division participated in the investigation, along with assistance from the Louisiana State Police and the 23rd Judicial District's District Attorney's Office.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.